



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
2018 Veteran Service Officer Information Session

Briefed by:

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September 2018

VBA Business Lines



Insurance



Education



Compensation



Vocational
Rehabilitation and
Employment



Education and
Career Counseling



Home Loan
Guaranty



Pension
and Fiduciary

*"To care for
him who shall have
borne the battle and
for his widow, and
his orphan."*

A. Lincoln



Benefits
Assistance

VBA FOOTPRINT: FY19 PROJECTIONS

- **Compensation:** \$95B to 5.27M beneficiaries
- **Pension:** \$5.6B to 468.7K beneficiaries
- **Education:** \$13.7B to 951.4K beneficiaries
- **VR&E:** \$1.8B to 149.7K beneficiaries
- **Housing:** +3million active loans worth over \$646B
- **Insurance:** \$1.9B to 5.97M beneficiaries



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Paul R. Lawrence , Ph.D.

Under Secretary for Benefits



- Army Veteran, raised in an Army family
- Economist by training
- 30 years of relevant experience for the job, working closely with federal leaders as a senior management consultant
- Focus areas:
 - Efficiency and effectiveness
 - Financial management
 - Improving performance
 - Management challenges
 - Leveraging technology to drive efficiencies
 - Driving change
 - Research & thought leadership on government management



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USB Three Areas of Focus

Customer Service



Financial Stewardship

Culture of Collaboration



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VBA Priorities 2018 & Beyond

DIGITIZATION *and* **AUTOMATION** ←

- **Centralized Intake of Claims Material**
- **Paper Extraction & Digitization of Inactive Claim Files**
- Decision Ready Claims
- Exam Management System
- Quality Management System

EFFICIENCY and SERVICE

- Update Performance Standards
- Expand Access to VA Systems
- **Modernize the Appeals Process**
- Continue to improve customer service at National Call Centers
- Improve Dependency Claims Processing
- Update the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD)

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- **Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC)**



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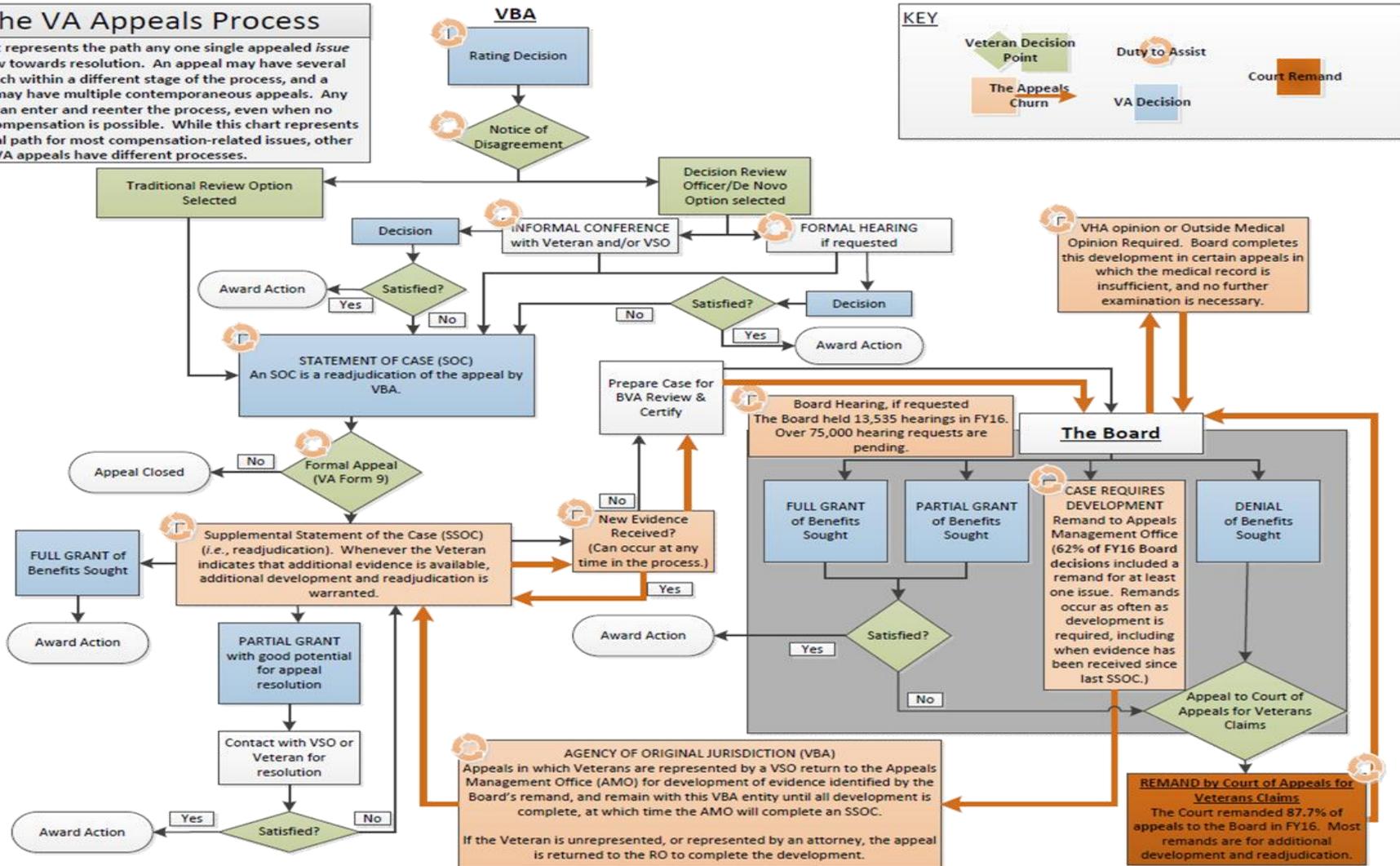


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VA Appeals Process Today

The VA Appeals Process

This chart represents the path any one single appealed issue can follow towards resolution. An appeal may have several issues, each within a different stage of the process, and a Veteran may have multiple contemporaneous appeals. Any Veteran can enter and reenter the process, even when no further compensation is possible. While this chart represents the typical path for most compensation-related issues, other types of VA appeals have different processes.



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Solution: Appeals Modernization Act

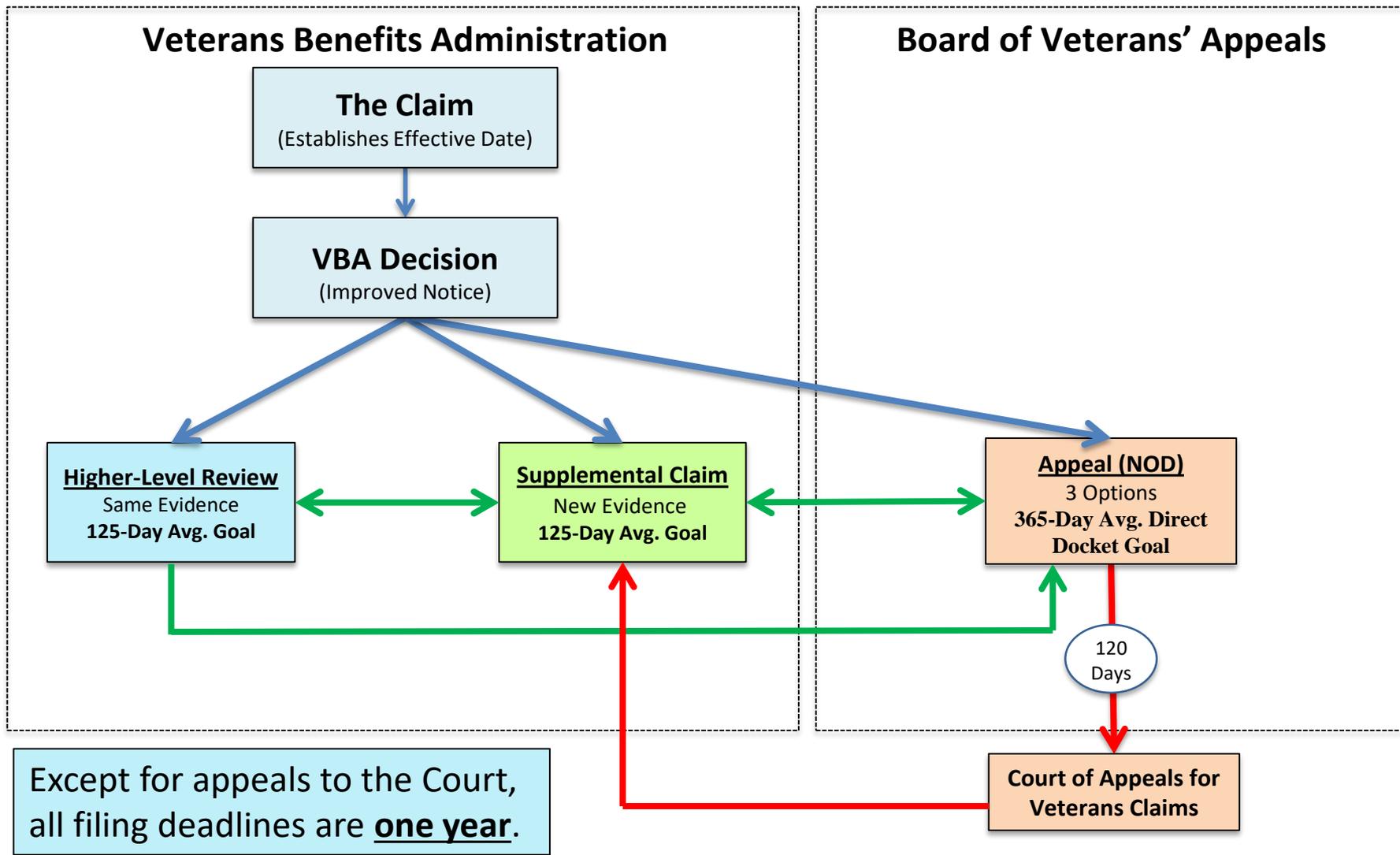
- On August 23, 2017, the [Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017](#) was signed into law. The new law takes effect in February 2019.
- It creates a new decision review process, which features three lanes:
 - [Higher-Level Review](#) – An entirely new review of the claim by an experienced adjudicator
 - [Supplemental Claim](#) – An opportunity to submit additional evidence
 - [Appeal](#) – Review by the Board of Veterans' Appeals



New Process: Three Lanes

VBA	VBA	BVA
Supplemental Claim Lane	Higher-Level Review Lane	Appeal Lane
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VA will readjudicate a claim if “new and relevant” evidence is presented or identified with a supplemental claim (open record)• VA will assist in gathering new and relevant evidence (duty to assist).• Effective date for benefits always protected (submitted within 1 year of decision)• Replaces “reopening” claims with “new and material” evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More experienced VA employee takes a second look at the same evidence (closed record and no duty to assist)• Option for a one-time telephonic informal conference with the higher-level reviewer to discuss the error in the prior decision• <i>De novo</i> review with full difference of opinion authority• Duty to assist errors returned to lower-level for correction (quality feedback)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence only docket: Additional evidence submitted within 90 days following NOD• Direct docket: Closed record and 365 days timeliness goal• Hearing docket: Board hearing and additional evidence submitted within 90 days following hearing

New Decision Review Process



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Rapid Appeals Modernization Program

The *Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP)*

began on November 1, 2017 and allows eligible Veterans with pending appeals the option to have their decisions reviewed in the new **Higher-Level Review** or **Supplemental Claim** lanes

As of April 2, 2018 any Veteran that meets the eligibility criteria below may participate in RAMP (no invitation required)

- Participation is voluntary and Veterans are encouraged to opt in
- Veterans must have an active disability compensation appeal in one of the following appeal stages:
 - NOD
 - Form 9
 - Certified to the Board (not activated)
 - Remand



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RAMP Opt-in Election

RAMP OPT-IN ELECTION

RETURN THIS PAGE ONLY IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN RAMP

(DO NOT complete this form if you wish to remain in the current legacy appeals process)

Once you have read and understood the attached VA letter, please indicate your election by completing and returning this notice with the coversheet provided to the address noted below.



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
EVIDENCE INTAKE CENTER
PO BOX 4444
JANE SVILLE WI 53547-4444
OR
FAX TO: 844-631-7818

By completing this form, I elect to participate in RAMP. I am withdrawing all eligible pending compensation appeals in their entirety, and any associated hearing requests, to participate in VA's RAMP Initiative and have my eligible appeals proceed under the new process described in the Appeals Modernization Act. I understand that I cannot return to the current (legacy) appeals system for the issues withdrawn. I also acknowledge that, in the event I want the Board to review my claim, the Board will not consider my appeal under the new process until no earlier than October 2018.

I elect the following review option (select only one):

Supplemental Claim

I elect to have all eligible issues currently on appeal processed as a supplemental claim. I would like to submit or have already submitted new and relevant evidence in support of my claim for benefits. I understand that I have 30 days from the date of my election to submit additional evidence or notify VA of evidence that VA can assist in gathering.

Higher-Level Review

I elect to have all eligible issues currently on appeal reviewed in the higher-level review process. I understand that this review will be based upon the evidence submitted to VA as of the date of this election and VA will not seek additional evidence on my behalf as part of the higher-level review.

Place a check in the box below if you would like a one-time telephonic informal conference with the Higher-Level Reviewer. If you have an accredited representative (VSO, attorney, or agent) please include his or her contact information below. (This option may cause some delay in the processing of your higher-level review in scheduling.)

Informal Conference

Representative/Org. _____

Phone Number _____

Claimant or Authorized Representative Signature

Date

Decision Review Operations Center (DROC)

Decision Review Operations Center (DROC)

DROC SeaTac

DROCs Total FTE: 227
 GS-15: 1
 GS-14: 2
 GS-13: 51
 GS-12: 48
 GS-11: 43
 GS-10: 65
 GS-09: 0
 GS-07: 2
 GS-06: 15
 Highest pay level is shown



Onboard Appeals Team: 27
 FTE FY19 Budget: 200
 Total St Pete DROC: 227

Title	Grade	QTY
Supv VSR (DROC Mgr)	GS15	1
Supv VSR (Asst DROC Mgr)	GS14	2
Supv VSR (Coach)	GS13	12
Supv VSR (Asst Coach)	GS12	8
DRO	GS13	31
DRO (RQRS)	GS13	7
VSR (Rating)	GS12	30
VSR (AQRS)	GS12	7
VSR	GS7/10	65
VSR (Authorizer)	GS11	40
Claims Assistant	GS6	15
Management Analyst	GS13	1
Management Analyst	GS12	1
Support Services Supervisor	GS12	1
Training Coordinator	GS12	1
Financial Admin Specialist	GS11	2
Financial Accounts Tech	GS6/7	2
HR Specialist	GS9/11	1
Total		227



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Useful VA Links

- <https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets.asp> (VBA Informational and factsheets)
- <https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/index.asp> (VBAs website)
- <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage> (Ebenefits homepage)
- <https://www.benefits.va.gov/seattle/> (Seattle Regional Office's homepage)



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